

## Social media overview

There are a variety of social media options, and each one offers unique opportunities and challenges. When deciding which social media platform is best for your campaign, it's important to consider several factors including audience, capability, requirements and restrictions. Before deciding on a social media platform, use the social media worksheet to develop your plan. To formulate a social media plan, the social media worksheet can be downloaded at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/communications/documents/Social%20media%20planning%20worksheet.pdf>.

*When posting and running a social media site for extension, please be sure to follow our guidelines, which can be found at [http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/communications/social\\_media.aspx](http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/communications/social_media.aspx).*

## Social media options

New social media platforms are sprouting up constantly, but Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest tend to dominate the social media landscape and remain the most effective platforms for organizations to find people and share content. A 2014 study by the Pew Research Center found:

- **Percentage of internet users per platform**
  - 71 percent are on Facebook
  - 23 percent are on Twitter (fastest growing)
  - 26 percent are on Instagram
  - 28 percent are on Pinterest
- **52 percent of all internet users use more than one social media site**
  - Facebook still dominates as 91 percent of Twitter users, 94 percent of Instagram users and 88 percent of Pinterest users also have Facebook.

## Facebook

Facebook remains the most outwardly effective platform for organizations, especially around extension. Not only does Facebook have more people, but it also allows you to share more information per post.

- **Pros**
  - You have more control over who sees things when it's connected to you. You can set controls where you have to accept and approve anything posted to your page or that you're tagged in.
  - Easy to embed into websites
- **Cons**
  - There are ads, especially on others' pages, that you cannot control.
  - Liking the page is pretty essential to seeing the content.

## Twitter

Twitter is a fast-paced social media platform that is experiencing rapid growth, especially for businesses and organizations. Uniquely, it is the only social media platform used by more men than women.

- **Pros**
  - You can post more often. Twitter is known for rapid-fire posts and live-tweeting of events. You can post many times a day on Twitter without people feeling spammed.
  - Hashtags work extremely well for connecting with others on a topic or event.
- **Cons**
  - 140 characters is all you get to post and everything else (images, links, etc.) come out of that total.
  - Less control over what people see when people tweet about you or at you.

## Instagram

Instagram is a photo-based platform also experiencing very rapid growth. It's an intuitive and easy-to-use platform, but it might not be the strongest for organizations or businesses sharing content. However, it could be great for 4-H and programs such as Master Gardener.

- **Pros**
  - There is no text limit, and you can share a lot of information per post.
  - The content and posts are easily sharable through other social media platforms and Web pages.
- **Cons**
  - Must have the phone app to use, you cannot post content online.
  - Must have a photo with every post, which can either limit the content you can share or increase the workload before posting content.

## Pinterest

Pinterest is another extremely popular photo-based platform experiencing rapid growth. Similar to Instagram, it might not be the strongest for organizations or businesses sharing a lot of text content, but it would work well for 4-H and more visual programs. Although women make up the majority of users on most social media platforms, women ages 18 to 64 make up a very large majority of Pinterest users.

- **Pros**
  - Can categorize and compartmentalize content most freely
  - A strong DIY and learner platform – great for extension content and research-based information
- **Cons**
  - It can be difficult to link posts back to your Web page and share other links.
  - Must have a photo with every post, which can either limit the content you can share or increase the workload before posting content.